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Statement submitted by International Federation of University Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Implementing the post-2015 development agenda on quality education for girls and women

The issue

Graduate Women International notes it is a matter for concern that global gender disparities still exist and disrupt the education continuum; in pre-primary education 70 percent of countries have achieved gender parity, compared to around 66 percent in primary, 50 percent in lower secondary, 29 percent in upper secondary and only 4 percent in tertiary. Graduate Women International reaffirms that the realisation of the right to quality education at all levels contributes to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Women earn only 60-75 percent of men's salaries; lack of access to education is a contributory factor to this disparity. For demographic dividends and sustainable development, investment in educating, employing and empowering women is essential to facilitate their full participation and integration in the formal economy.

The cause

Barriers to girls and women accessing and completing education exist at many levels. Merely ensuring access to education is not enough; unsafe school environments and biases in teacher behaviour and training, teaching and learning processes, and curricula and textbooks often lead to lower completion and achievement rates for girls. Social norms and cultural practices such as child marriage, domestic responsibilities and financial prioritisation of boy's education contribute further to lack of opportunity for girls and women in education. Existing data does not provide sufficient information about the situation of women and girls throughout their lives, which contributes to a lack of understanding on the best way to tackle barriers to girls and women's education and access to employment.

Graduate Women International Position and Recommendations

As the realisation of the right to education contributes to the empowerment of women and girls, Graduate Women International calls for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into education and training programmes at all levels and all spheres, including science and technology. Gender-sensitive curricula and pedagogies need to be developed and implemented, including the gender sensitisation of all educators and by training and hiring qualified women teachers. Building safe and inclusive learning environments for girls and young women, and ending violence against girls and women, need to be priorities. Eradication of female illiteracy and support of school-to-work transition through skills development programmes to enable girls' and women's active participation in economic, social and cultural development should be initiated. Specific areas of gender disparity need to be addressed by awareness-building initiatives and by involving boys and men in discussions about disempowering cultural and societal practices.

As identified by the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, financing to institutionalise data collection, analysis and review on key gender equality indicators in education would mobilise necessary support and partnerships for the implementation of the post 2015 agenda, enhance cooperation across ministries and institutions and help identify areas where support is needed.